

Article - Education

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§5–242.

- (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.
- (2) “Initiative” means the Maryland Early Literacy Initiative.
- (3) “Interventionist” means a trained professional whose primary responsibility is to deliver evidence-based early literacy intervention.
- (4) “Literacy program” means a literacy program implemented by an interventionist.
- (5) “Nonprofit organization” means a nonprofit organization that:
 - (i) Is based in the State;
 - (ii) Is incorporated or registered under the laws of the State;
 - (iii) Is exempt from federal income tax under § 501(c)(3), (4), or (6) of the Internal Revenue Code;
 - (iv) Is current in the payment of all tax obligations to the State or any unit or subdivision of the State; and
 - (v)
 - 1. Has been in active business for 3 years or more at the time of the application submitted under this section; or
 - 2. Has a fiscal sponsor who can meet the requirements of this section.
- (6) “Participating student” means a student:
 - (i) In prekindergarten through eighth grade; or
 - (ii) Who performs below a certain score, as determined by the Department, on the assessment the Department uses to assess reading level.
- (7) “Qualifying school” means a public school categorized by the local school system as a Title I school.

(b) (1) There is a Maryland Early Literacy Initiative in the Department.

(2) The purpose of the Initiative is to assist up to 50 qualifying schools to implement an evidence-based literacy program in the school to work with participating students to meet literacy proficiency targets by the end of eighth grade or other literacy targets as determined by the Department.

(3) The Initiative shall be established in at least three counties.

(4) The Initiative shall be developed and administered by the Department.

(c) (1) (i) For the 2018–2019 school year through the 2021–2022 school year, a qualifying school may apply to the Department to receive a grant for the qualifying school to develop a literacy program that is in furtherance of the purpose of the Initiative.

(ii) A qualifying school may apply for a grant only if the county superintendent endorses the school's grant application.

(iii) A qualifying school may coordinate and partner with other qualifying schools in the county to jointly apply for a grant to develop a literacy program among the partnering qualifying schools.

(iv) A county board may apply on behalf of one or more qualifying schools in the county.

(2) An application shall:

(i) Identify whether the qualifying school will work in collaboration with a nonprofit organization or the county board to implement the literacy program;

(ii) Provide the name and qualifications of the nonprofit organization, if the qualifying school will work in collaboration with a nonprofit organization;

(iii) Include a description of:

1. The literacy program to be implemented at the qualifying school;

2. The training that will be provided to the interventionist to provide the services under this section; and

3. How the literacy program will meet the requirements under subsection (d) of this section; and

(iv) Include any other information required by the Department.

(3) If the number of applications exceeds the number of available grants, the Department shall give priority in awarding grants to a qualifying school serving a high concentration of students living in poverty in prekindergarten through third grade.

(d) A literacy program developed under the Initiative shall:

(1) Provide early literacy intervention services for participating students;

(2) Require participating students to receive direct services at least twice a week;

(3) Have clear literacy targets at each grade level for participating students;

(4) Have benchmark assessments multiple times a year to identify students who need one-on-one interventions; and

(5) Collect data on student progress at least monthly.

(e) The literacy program developed at a qualifying school under the Initiative shall be implemented by staff hired and supervised by the collaborating nonprofit organization or the county board.

(f) (1) (i) For fiscal years 2019 through 2022, the Governor shall include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$2,500,000 to the Department for the Initiative.

(ii) The Department may retain up to 3% of the appropriation required to be included in the annual budget bill under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph to hire staff necessary to administer the Initiative.

(2) (i) The Department shall distribute up to 50 grants for a 2-year period.

(ii) In awarding grants under the Initiative, the Department shall make every effort to ensure that qualifying schools use literacy programs that utilize various evidence-based approaches and methodologies for:

1. Comparison purposes; and
2. The collection of multiple data points for long-term review.

(3) A grant made to each qualifying school may not exceed \$75,000 each year.

(4) A grant made under this section shall be renewed by the Department after a 2-year period if the qualifying school presents evidence that the qualifying school is:

- (i) In compliance with this section; and
- (ii) Meeting identified targets and benchmarks.

(5) Each qualifying school may apply for and accept donations, grants, or other financial assistance from a governmental entity, a nonprofit organization, or any other private organization to benefit the literacy program.

(g) On or before July 1, 2018, the Department shall adopt regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

(h) On or before December 1, 2022, the Department shall submit an evidence-based report summarizing the status of efforts under the Initiative, including recommendations to increase the success of the Initiative, to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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